

Schedule

VIRGIN ISLANDS

MARCH 1, MONDAY
4:30 pm – 8:30 pm
Multi-purpose Room
Virgin Islands National Park
Maintenance Facility, Upstairs
Located at the start of
North Shore Road next to
Mongoose Junction
Cruz Bay, St. John

MARCH 2, TUESDAY
12:30 pm – 2:30 pm
National Park Service Guinea
Company Warehouse
Ground Floor
Old U.S. Post Office Bldg.
2100 Church Street, #100
Christiansted, St. Croix

MARCH 2, TUESDAY
5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
St. Croix Yacht Club
5100 Teague Bay
Christiansted, St. Croix

MARCH 3, WEDNESDAY
5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
St. George Village
Botanical Garden
of St. Croix, Great Hall
127 East St. George
Frederiksted, St. Croix

FLORIDA

MARCH 3, WEDNESDAY
3:30 pm – 7:30 pm
Comfort Inn
3860 Tollgate Blvd.
Naples, Florida

MARCH 4, THURSDAY
3:30 pm – 7:30 pm
Homestead YMCA
1034 NE 8th St.
Homestead, Florida

Nature and Extent of the Exotic Plant Problem

Non-native invasive species (often referred to as non-indigenous, exotic, alien, nuisance, or noxious) are defined as species that are “non-native to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health” (Executive Order 13112).

For the purpose of the exotic plant management plan, invasive non-native plants will be referred to as *exotic plants*. These plants are an environmental epidemic of global proportions. In the United States, exotic plant infestations are one of the leading causes of habitat loss, which results in changes in the numbers and species of fish, native plants, and wildlife. It is estimated that exotic plants invade 4,600 acres of federal land every day, with areas larger than the state of Delaware infested each

year. To date, exotic plants have taken root in approximately 1.5 million acres in the national park system.

Because of the mild, humid climate, areas such as south Florida and the Caribbean are especially susceptible to exotic plant infestations. The national parks within this region are struggling to deal with the problem. Within Florida parks alone, there are an estimated 400,000 acres of exotic plants, and in the Caribbean parks, nearly 25% of the 750 plant species are considered to be exotic plants. Certain species have been identified as a priority for treatment because of their level of infestation or the threat they pose to the natural ecosystem. Exotic plant species that are a high priority for treatment in the south Florida parks include Australian pine (*Casuarina equisetifolia*), Melaleuca (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*), Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), and Old World climbing fern (*Lygodium*



Australian pines are a problem exotic plant species for the five Florida parks.

microphyllum). The exotic plant species that are a high priority for treatment in the Caribbean parks include guinea grass (*Panicum maximum*), tan tan (*Leucaena leucocephala*), and lime berry (*Tripbasia trifolia*).

There are various ways that exotic plants find their way into parks. Seeds and plant parts are brought into parks by wildlife, wind, water, and humans. If exotic plants are growing outside of, but along park boundaries, they can spread into the park. Exotic plants inside the parks can also spread onto adjacent lands managed by other federal, state, and local agencies. That’s why it is important that the parks and local and state agencies work together to control exotic plants.

Your Participation is Vital to the Planning Process

The National Park Service wants to know what you think about the exotic plant management plan. What are your interests, issues, and concerns? Your input is important as the National Park Service develops and refines the management alternatives that will be analyzed in the environmental impact statement.

The National Park Service will maintain a mailing list throughout the process. Informational materials will be distributed during the process to those on the mailing list. In addition, anyone interested in being added to or removed from the mailing list should reply with the enclosed comment form or contact the National Park Service at the address or email shown to the right.

SCOPING OPEN HOUSES: YOU’RE INVITED

Scoping is the first step for involving the public in the planning process. Because the environmental impact statement will analyze many complex ecological and social issues, your participation is encouraged and needed. At the open houses, posters and fact sheets will provide additional information about the exotic plant management plan. National Park Service staff and resource specialists will be on hand to visit with you, answer questions, and record your input.

Comments will be accepted at the open houses. The schedule is on page two. If you are not able to attend one of the open houses, there are other ways that you can submit comments during the scoping process.

You can fold and return the enclosed comment form with your comments or send a letter to

Sandra Hamilton
National Park Service
Environmental Quality Division
Academy Place
PO Box 25287
Denver, CO 80225

Or you can submit comments via email to flca@den.nps.gov.

To be most helpful, please send your comments by April 1, 2004.

Here are some great websites that contain additional information about exotic plants:

- <http://www.fleppc.org/>
- <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/>
- <http://stxenvironmental.org/>
- <http://rps.uvi.edu/?ces/index.html>

Brazilian pepper, one of the greatest threats to Everglades National Park, infests between 180,000 and 200,000 acres. It is also a problem in the other Florida and Caribbean parks.